



Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

DPI VISTA Monthly

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"If we cannot envision the world we would like to live in, we cannot work towards its creation. If we cannot place ourselves in it in our imagination, we will not believe it is possible. "

-Chellis Glendinning, author

Jane Grinde
Project Director
Betsy Prueter
Project Coordinator
Ruth Anne Landsverk
Family Education Coordinator
Casey Gauthier
VISTA Leader

Why I'm Proud of You

by Betsy Prueter

The end of the school year is fast approaching. You're thanking your volunteers for their hard work, congratulating your action teams on their success, grateful that last family night went smoothly, and showing gratitude towards your supervisor for his or her support and guidance. It's been a busy, challenging, and rewarding year. DPI is fortunate to have VISTAs helping to engage families and community members in meaningful partnerships and we should tell you why! Consider this a pat on the back (ok, 7 pats on the back).

1. You wrote and submitted over 320 bi-weekly reports.
2. You reached families through newsletters, email, phone calls, learning nights, potlucks, resource fairs, and meetings.

3. You mapped needs and assets to better serve your community.

4. You've met with principals, executive directors, students, parents, school board members, community agencies, library staff, and teachers to promote meaningful partnerships and the VISTA mission.



5. You've raised over \$125,000 of in-kind and monetary donations for your sites.
6. You've developed sustainable partnerships with libraries, schools, non-profits, and businesses that will continue after your service year.
7. You've kept your perspective and remembered how your work, at your

site, in your city, is building strong communities and impacting students.

8.

9.

10.

I've left those last three blank on purpose and propose a little assignment. What are you proud of from this past year? What would you like to pat yourself on the back for? Go ahead do it. Reflect a bit on why you deserve such kudos and while you're at it, take some time to send along affirmation to some other VISTAs. We could all use some encouragement to kick off our summer projects, programs, and tasks!

Save the Dates!



**June 15th-
Sustainability
Webinar/Monthly
Check-In**

**June 30th- NNPS
Update due**

**July 10th- VISTA
Retreat, Oxford**

**July 15th- Quarterly
Reports due**

Fruit and Tofu Smoothie



Submitted by Casey Gauthier

This month, I'd like to share with you a recipe with plenty of options! This was my way to get protein through tofu during my vegetarian years. It's delicious, especially in warm weather, and packed with so many things your body needs!

- 2 cups of ice
- 2 cups of frozen strawberries
- ½ cup of pineapple, with juice
- 1 banana
- 6 ounces of yogurt
- 1 ½ ounces of silken soft tofu (I've always used the brand Mori-Nu)

Feel free to add and subtract fruit. Other fruit options include: blueberries, raspberries, kiwis, oranges, peaches, mangos.

Discovering my Purpose

By Matt Dolezal

After graduating from the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design with a Bachelor's in Photography and an emphasis on video, I needed a break. After a few months of working part time and trying to figure out the next step, my roommate and I began exploring Peace Corps and

AmeriCorps. We each ended up applying for twenty VISTA positions around the country.

Part of the allure of full-time service has to do with an uncertainty – the mysterious nature of what, exactly, your service will entail, and how your unique skills will be utilized. During my process of becoming a VISTA, including the Pre-Service Orientation (PSO), I heard many accounts of inspiring experiences and became quite intrigued with the prospects of my upcoming year. I was also excited to return to my hometown, where I would be making a positive impact on my community working in an elementary school in the Appleton Area School District (AASD).

The first few weeks were a bit slow, since I began in the middle of summer, but it seemed right to become familiarized gradually, before things got hectic. I met several staff members and eventually, as the school-year progressed, I felt completely comfortable and welcome in the school. The site did have a VISTA the previous year, but only a few days per week, so I was basically taking over a part-time position with a full-time schedule. I always had a few small projects that I was developing, such as the Walking School Bus, a program that allows for groups of students to walk to school with parent volunteers. However, I was having some difficulty implementing larger projects, such as an after-school tutoring program and a family literacy night. My supervisor was a new principal– she started the same time I did, so at least we were newcomers together. As one might imagine, she

was busy constantly, and very new to the concept of VISTA. She was very helpful, as were other staff members, but there were some struggles to get things moving. To make a long story short, the school was unable to continue their commitment with the VISTA project, and I met with my VISTA Leader Betsy Prueter to discuss my future as a VISTA. We all agreed that I would transfer to another site in January.

I was a bit disappointed at first, trying to re-evaluate the previous months, but I was also relieved of the frustration I had experienced, and ready to move on to something new. After the meeting, I talked to Betsy briefly over the phone, and she mentioned my experience video editing and filming (which I had apparently included on my original VISTA application) and some



possible future projects. This perked my interest, especially since I had forgotten about my inclusion of

this detail. Within mere hours, as I was cleaning my desk, AASD Director of Special Education Brian Anderson arrived to discuss my new placement with the district office. I guess word travels fast. The project would be a training DVD for incoming teachers on culturally responsive teaching practices. We would be exploring the plight of various minority groups and promoting multicultural awareness in the district.

Due to my interest in issues related to social justice, the proposal was right up my alley. I went from feeling despondent earlier that day, to feeling a renewed sense of purpose and motivation.

I discussed the plans for this project in great detail with Brian and, during the next few months, began gathering archival footage and conducting interviews. In addition to the new tasks at my new site, I also began conducting site visits and interviews for a Wisconsin DPI VISTA Project DVD. The main purpose of this DVD will be the promotion of VISTA throughout the state, and will contain interviews with VISTAs, supervisors, school staff, footage of VISTA-related events, and more.

In all, I visited fourteen VISTAs in seven different cities. My observations at these sites were revealing in different ways, but one unifying trait that stood out was how effective VISTAs can be at promoting family and community involvement in schools. Each site was unique in its needs, and each VISTA was working tirelessly with parent and community volunteers to meet – and exceed – those needs. I realized that I was witnessing the experiences that my earlier months of service had lacked. Part of my purpose as a VISTA was now clear – to share the unique and inspiring stories I had documented with those who could benefit from such praiseworthy practices. I also learned to appreciate my own experience as a testament to the endless possibilities a year of VISTA service can bring.

Kelly answers Chris' questions

Kelly is serving at the South Madison Health and Family Center.



Chris: What is something that you are looking forward to this summer?

Kelly: Warm weather mostly. I really think I was born in the wrong temperature zone. Also, I am really looking forward to some of the summer programs we are working on and with the summer volunteers we are getting. We're going canoeing, which I've never done, so it should be exciting.

Chris: If you could have any job, what would it be?

Kelly: I'd say a ballerina. Really, I love ballet. I love dancing. I love grace and long lines and flexibility.

Chris: What is your favorite project, event or activity you were part of during your VISTA year?

Kelly: Well, I've done a lot of breaking ground, getting my name out there, going to meetings, making appearances just so people know who I am. But of the things I have done, I'd say I really think the volunteer corps that I have worked very hard to build is fantastic. They are very committed, smart,

interesting and really build strong rapport with families and children.

Chris: What will you indulge yourself with after you get a real, paying job?

Kelly: I will indulge myself in paying off my debt (which is going to be ridiculous after law school). I'd think about getting season tickets to the Brewers or the ballet of whatever city I live in, but I'd likely just get a car. I haven't owned one in my life and I'm hoping I can make it three more years without one.



Chris: Who will you miss the most when you are no longer a VISTA?

Kelly: Well, I think I'll miss everyone as cheesy as that sounds. Betsy is an awesome listener and supervisor and manages to guide me through each and every breakdown I have. And when I visit Milwaukee (or the Milwaukee VISTAs come to Madison) I feel so at home. But I'll also miss sharing rooms with fancy hotels with everyone, and having crazy adventures (like losing my glasses at the Kalahari or cramming as many DPI VISTAs into one table at a conference or being the chatty table during sessions). I've had some great conversations with people, some hilarious moments, fun mall runs and great nights out. It's sort of like being part of an extended family, where you don't get to see those relatives all the time but when you do it's awesome!

Chris: What are your plans after VISTA?

Kelly: I'm pretty excited about this. I'll be attending St. Louis University

Law School. I just found out yesterday that I got lots of federal loan money and a big scholarship from the school and now tuition is incredibly affordable. I'm not sure what kind of law I want to go into, either constitutional/1st amendment law or sports and entertainment law.

Chris: Tap or ballet?

Kelly: That's tough, but...ballet. I do really like tap dancing though!

Chris: Juice or milk?

Kelly: Milk; a lot of juice is too sweet for me.

Chris: McDonald's or Burger King?

Kelly: Hmmm, Taco Bell? Guilty pleasure.

Chris: Dogs or cats?

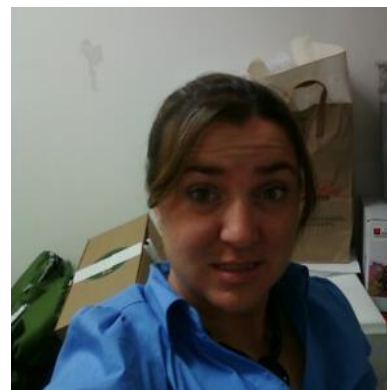
Kelly: Dogs- small ones.

Chris: Talk or text?

Kelly: Text. Not that I don't like talking, but I feel like I always have to yell or something.

Chris answers Kelly's questions

Chris is serving with the Wausau Early Childhood Education Program.



Kelly: How is your VISTA experience going?

Chris: My VISTA experience has been great! I have met some great families and worked with fantastic staff!

Kelly: What is the most important thing you have learned while being a VISTA?

Chris: Having worked in the classroom and different school programs with kids for the past few years, this experience has offered me a different perspective. It has taught me how important it is to get to know the families of the children in your school/schools. How much these families have to offer not just their own children, but schools, other families and the community as a whole!

Kelly: What do you plan on doing after VISTA?

Chris: I have no idea! I would love to teach eventually and get my Master's degree at some point.

Kelly: Now that you are nearly finished, what kind of advice would you give an incoming VISTA?

Chris: Always keep the perspective of who you are there for, the people, whether it be families, children or individuals. Our role is to make a difference to the people; to me that is what ending poverty is about.

Kelly: What is your ethnic background? Does your family celebrate any particular traditions? Do you like that kind of food? Have you ever been to those countries?

Chris: My mom's side of the family is partly Italian and because I was closest to those grandparents, I have always identified myself with that

heritage. Yes, I could eat pasta everyday for the rest of my life! But I have not visited Italy yet!

Kelly: How's your son?

Chris: Brady Briggs will be turning 3 yrs old on August 23rd and he is so cool when he is not being naughty! He talks constantly, just like his mother! He loves "school," playing ball, and swimming.



Kelly: What is your favorite thing to do to relax?

Chris: Relax? What's that? I garden and just got a super cool beach cruiser bike.

Kelly: Small town or big city?

Chris: Small town to live, but big city to shop.

Kelly: Early bird or night owl?

Chris: Formerly night owl, but now neither. I take all the sleep I can get!

Team-preserving Tips for Summertime

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Those lazy days of summer may be great for relaxing, but they're hard on keeping the "team" in Partnership Action Teams. While it's good to take a collective team break during the summer months, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) does have a few tasks that Action Teams can do to end one year and prepare for the next. Those activities include:

- Complete an End-of-Year Evaluation (p. 330-341*).

- Complete the UPDATE survey of NNPS members by June 30th:
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nnps_model/school/evaluation.htm#UPDATE

NNPS waives annual renewal fees for members who return their UPDATE.

- Select replacement members for next year's Action Team.
- Conduct team training. Some schools invite Action Team members to participate in teacher in-service sessions.
- Develop special partnership materials such as TIPS interactive homework activities (p. 275*).

Here are a few communication and project ideas to keep the partnership flame burning in the hearts of all Action Team members in between those visits to the beach, ballgames, and backyard barbeques:

- Make sure everyone has an up-to-date list of Action Team names, phone numbers, and e-mails. Include dates that the school principal will be available during the summer.
- Ask one member to act as key contact during the summer to handle any communications needs that arise.
- Schedule one Action Team meeting mid-summer to catch up on reflections from last year and thoughts for

the year ahead. Choose a relaxed location and make it enjoyable, perhaps over smoothies or a light lunch.



- Review "Back-to-School" events to make sure they'll welcome new families and those of transitioning students in September.
- Conduct an on-line team project that doesn't require everyone to be in the same place at the same time:
 - Explore one of the free online survey services such as Survey Monkey or Zoomerang, then devise your own survey for families at your school
 - Rate the family-friendliness of your school or district website. Does it offer daily school announcements, online registration, and easy-to-navigate web links for families?
 - View and reflect on the keynote address and other remarks by Karen Mapp, noted partnerships author

and Harvard lecturer, at the 2009 Parent Leadership Conference. An audio recording of her remarks will be online soon at the DPI Family-School-Community Partnerships webpage.

- Conduct a book study of, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, By Anne Henderson et al, a valuable compendium of hundreds of ideas.
- Schedule a team visit to a summer school site and find out how the site welcomes parents and keeps them involved in what students are doing and learning.

Happy summer, VISTAs and Action Teams!

**School, Family, and Community Partnerships by Joyce Epstein, Third Edition, 2009 Corwin Press*

A Rewarding Supervisor Experience

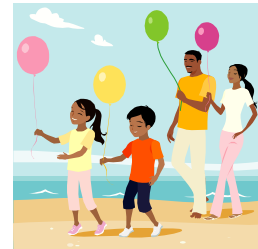
By Glenda McMiller

The Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee has been very fortunate to have had VISTAs for the past three years. Looking back on the past two school years that I have been a Student Support Manager at BEAM, I have seen a great evolution of parent

involvement, which is proven to increase student achievement. Much of this is directly attributed to the work of the VISTAs served very passionately and tirelessly.

This year was my first serving as a VISTA supervisor, which has truly been rewarding. Stephanie Jung and Brendan Gants have been exemplary VISTAs; they have been integral in vitalizing and invigorating the existing ATP, resulting in a structured, sustainable ATP. Our ATP has greatly increased parent and family activities, as well as increased community partnerships. This year we have experienced having the highest attended High School Fair, and very well attended Math and Science nights.

Also, as result of the hard work of the VISTAs, our dream of having a Parent Resource Center is now a reality. Once fully equipped, the resource



center will provide parents with a space of their own in the school, where they can utilize any of ten computers to search for jobs, study for their GED, or access a variety of services and sources of information that can help them improve life for themselves and their family.

We are so grateful at BEAM to have VISTAs serving our community and we thank the VISTA project for a great partnership these last three years.

“Hey! That’s a Good Idea!” Corner



Kelly Karls and her Action Team at Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center in Green Bay planned a Summer Concert in the Park for families, which will showcase the music program at Howe Elementary School and provide parents with information and resources on how music in the classroom is beneficial for their children. **PARENTING**

Michelle Traxel, serving with Spooner Middle School, was readily available at a Spring Fling event to chat with families and their children to discuss any questions, updates on summer school, and anything else they might need to know. Sometimes it’s nice just to be on hand for spontaneous questions, concerns or conversations! **COMMUNICATING**

Kim Yoder at Kosciusko Montessori School in Milwaukee, recently purchased books and reading materials for her site that families can check out. These free resources will give parents some practical, easy to do ideas on how to continue Montessori teachings at home. **LEARNING AT HOME**

Stephanie Jung, serving with the Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee, is working with Milwaukee Urban Gardens to obtain a permit from the city to turn the lot across the street into a school garden. She hopes this will become one of the activities students and families can participate in during summer school. **COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY**

Robyn Krimke sent home information and resources to families at U.S. Grant Elementary School in Milwaukee sharing tips and strategies to ensure promote internet safety. **LEARNING AT HOME**

Nicole Stachurski has been working to engage families in decision making processes at Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids. She has reached out to parents to get their input on upcoming events and has also asked parents to evaluate their Family Math Night experience by filling out an evaluation questionnaire she developed. This evaluation will help provide information on how the event went and how it should run next year. **DECISION MAKING**

Grant Opportunities



NEEF: Classroom Earth Professional Development Grants

The National Environmental Education Foundation's Classroom Earth Professional Development grants help high school teachers new to the field of environmental education who want to increase the environmental literacy of their students. Maximum award: \$1,500 to take two graduate-level courses offered online by the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point's Environmental Education and Training Partnership.

Deadline: June 12, 2009.

<http://www.classroomearth.org/professional-development-grant-2009>

Gale/Library Media Connection: TEAMS Award

The Gale/Library Media Connection TEAMS Award recognizes and encourages the critical collaboration between the teacher and media specialist to promote learning, increase student achievement and develop 21st century skills. Maximum award: \$2,500.

Deadline: June 15, 2009.

<http://www.galeschools.com/pdf/TEAMS-form.pdf>

Youth Service America: Gladys Marinelli Coccia Awards

Youth Service America is launching its first annual Gladys Marinelli Coccia Awards to recognize young female social entrepreneurs whose initiatives serve the common good. Maximum award: \$2,000 for the winner's social enterprise, travel to and registration for Youth Service Institute, an invitation to serve on the executive board of Girls Helping Girls, and access to YSA's resources to support and expand social enterprise.

Deadline: June 15, 2009.

<http://ysa.org/MyYSA/YSAContent/YSAnews/tabid/219/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/147/TheGladysMarinelliCocciaAwards.aspx>

Disney/YSA: Minnie Grants for youth-led service projects

Disney Minnie Grants fund children's efforts to improve their communities via youth-led service projects that address the issues of poverty, hunger, education, environment, global citizenship, sustainable community development, and disaster prevention and relief. Funded projects must take place between September and November 2009. Maximum award: \$500.

Deadline: June 15, 2009.

<http://ysa.org/MyYSA/YSAContent/YSAnews/tabid/219/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/134/DisneyMinnieGrant2ndRound2009.aspx>

Samsung Techwin: Focus on Learning Grant Program

Samsung is offering Samsung 850DX document cameras, based on need, to help teachers upgrade the quality of technology tools in American schools. Maximum award: document camera (\$899 value).

Deadline: June 15, 2009.

<http://www.samsunggrants.com/>

KnowledgeWorks/American Architectural Foundation: Richard Riley Award

KnowledgeWorks Foundation and the American Architectural Foundation seek submissions for the Richard Riley Award, which recognizes design and educational excellence in "schools as centers of community" -- schools that provide an array of social, civic, recreational, and artistic opportunities to the broader community and to students, often clustering educational and municipal buildings together. Maximum award: \$10,000

Deadline: July 1, 2009.

<http://www.nationalschoolsearch.org/en/Index.html>

NAESP/MetLife Foundation: Sharing the Dream Grants

National Association of Elementary School Principals/MetLife Foundation Sharing the Dream Grants let principals test ideas about involving and engaging their communities to build greater ownership for the work of their school by sharing leadership and decision-making, by keeping all stakeholders informed about all school news -- good and bad -- and by creating a school climate that

fosters open communication, safety and security, and respect for every individual. Maximum award: \$3,000.

Deadline: July 8, 2009.

<http://www.naesp.org/resources/1/Pdfs/09SharingtheDreamApp.pdf>

American Legion: Grants for Child Welfare

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants to Help Children fund proposals that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children through innovative organizations and/or their programs designed to benefit youth. Maximum award: \$70,000.

Deadline: July 15, 2009.

<http://www.legion.org/cwf/grantseekers/overview>

Adobe Youth Voices /What Kids Kids Can Do: International Photo Competition

Adobe Youth Voices and What Kids Can Do invite youth around the world to submit photographs based on the theme of "Crisis and Hope," expressing themselves on both what is challenging and what gives hope in today's difficult world. Maximum award: Winning photographs will be showcased online, in a traveling exhibit, and in a book.

Deadline: July 31, 2009.

http://www.wkcd.org/AYV_Photo_Competition/Home.html